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ABSTRACT

A liberal education (in which the student is exposed to a variety of different religions, political systems, economic systems, cultures, types of art work, and types of music) helps the student develop an appreciation of all these entities. In college, students are drawn from different states and school districts, and even different parts of the world. A part of a truly liberal education is the study of the history of engineering and mathematics. Physical education and leisure studies are also important. Such an education will affect society, providing a better work environment as people better understand one another's differences. A truly liberal education will help supervisors and managers realize that workers are capable of making a meaningful contribution to the company or organization, thus resulting in more loyal workers. It is through a truly liberally educated populace that it will be possible to build a great society, and America can become the great nation that the founding fathers intended it to be, where people of different races, sexes, religions, and national origins can find life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. A list of 10 suggested readings is appended. (SM)

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THE EFFECT OF A TRULY LIBERAL EDUCATION ON SOCIETY

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THE EFFECT OF A TRULY LIBERAL EDUCATION ON SOCIETY

First of all, a definition of what is meant by a "liberal education." A liberal education is one in which the student is exposed to a variety of different religions, a variety of different political systems, a variety of different economic systems, a variety of different cultures, a variety of different types of art work, and a variety of different types of music. It is an education in which the student develops an appreciation of all of these different types of entities. The student develops an appreciation of the different types of religions, even though they might be different from his or her own. The student develops an appreciation of different points of view, even though those points of view may be different from his or her own.

In elementary, middle, and high schools, students become aware of themselves. To some extent, but not to a very large extent, they learn about others. They learn about some of the things that other people like

that are different from what they like. They learn about some of the things that other people believe that are different from what they believe. But, because schools are based on a district or regional environment, we don't have a real diversity of students in elementary schools, middle or junior high schools, or high schools. We don't have students that are really different, i.e., students that have different beliefs, different value systems, and that come from different political systems.

On the other hand, in each of our colleges, usually we have students that are drawn from different states and different school districts. We have students from different countries and different parts of the world. We have students that were brought up under different political systems, different types of family structures, and different types of educational and economic systems, etc.

In high school, I might have looked at a Russian and said that I don't like Russians, just based on being in America, and just based on the way Russian were spoken of in America when I was a high school student. (Russia was one of our arch enemies, when I was in high school. The cold war was in effect.) This

might very well be the feeling that any student might have when he or she finishes high school. During the 1940s, the feeling might have been directed toward the Japanese. Whatever the case, as students grow up and finish high school and go on to college, and study and converse with Japanese and/or Russians, they realize that such peoples are human beings just like they are. At that time the political system or economic system of the Japanese or Russian person becomes secondary. The students begin to realize that they (Russians, Japanese, Libyans, Iranians, etc.) are human beings and not just some foreign enemy. So, in college, we have more diversity.

In college, a student might have a French, mathematics, or science professor that is from a foreign country. The political system of the country might be different from that of ours. For example, the "law" of the separation of church and state might be different. In Germany, for example, at least during the 1960s and 1970s, there was not this idea of the separation of church and state. (I had a German professor during that time. He indicated to me that the tithes that were paid to the church were collected by the government. It was not like it is in America, where

tithes are paid on a voluntary basis. So, this was something foreign to me. But, by talking to someone that had lived under that system, I developed an understanding of how that type of system works and how our system differs from that system and how a person could very well be a nice person, and be from a system where you don't have separation of church and state.) So really, on the college level, the student has a better chance of becoming more liberally educated by being exposed to professors from more diverse backgrounds.

Some people close their minds to the wide variety of political systems that are out there. They say "I believe in democracy and it is the only system that will work." This is how many of our students feel when they finish high school. They have read the textbooks about WWI and about WWII and about the Revolutionary War and all the other conflicts in which America has been involved. They have read about how Americans have been striving for freedom and democracy and so on. At the time they finish high school, they have this high feeling of idealism and nationalism within themselves. When they go to college, they learn about other countries. For example, they learn that France has a

more democratic political system we have. This new found knowledge is hard to take, at first. It is hard for our students to believe that it is possible for another country to be more democratic than we are. (The French have several different viable political parties, whereas in the United States, we have only two.)

When students learn about the struggles of the communists during their revolution and the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO and things of that nature, it helps them to understand "where they (the Russians) are coming from." In college students learn about the French Revolution. This broadens their knowledge and understanding of other peoples and nations.

The college curriculum is extremely important, if a person is to get a truly liberal education. We need courses wherein people can study music appreciation. As a college graduate you need to have an appreciation for all of the major types of music. You need to have an appreciation of classical music, of country western music. Even if you are a punk rocker, you should still develop an appreciation of all of those other types of music.

There are various and sundry types of music. You should realize, as a liberally educated person, that

there is something to be gained by listening to all of those different types of music. There are people that like particular types of music. Just because a person likes a particular kind of music you should not put a label on that person and say that "That person is not in my class." Just because a person doesn't like classical music, say Bach or Beethoven, does not mean that I can write that person off as not being a friend of mine, or as not being a person that I can communicate with. Even if I don't like a certain type of music, as a liberally educated person, I should be able to develop some type of appreciation of that music, even if it's just an appreciation of the way the words rhyme, or the rhythm of the song, or just the tone in which the singer is singing. I should be able to develop some appreciation of the value of that music, if I am a truly liberally educated person. The same is true of country western music, rhythm and blues, etc. You might be able to appreciate the instrumental part of the music, if not the words of the music. Or, you might be able to appreciate the rhythm of the music, if not the words or the instruments.

The same thing is true of art. We look at art and we see realistic pictures of nature, realistic pictures

of still lifes, realistic pictures of portraits of individuals. But, when it comes to modern art or impressionism, we are not quite sure of what it represents. Although this is true, we should still be able to develop an appreciation of those types of art. If we analyze the art work and look at it and study it, I am sure we will be able to come up with some type of appreciation of it. Even though we may basically not like impressionism or modern art or surrealism or so forth, we can develop an appreciation for it. This will help broaden our scope, imagination, and tolerance for different types of artistic works.

There are art critics and artists that make decisions as to what is good and what is bad in different types of art. But, we, as individuals, should be able to appreciate art, whether it done by prehistoric man or by the French artists, or by African Americans, or by Africans period. We should be able to appreciate art in some way whether we like it or not. We might not like going to the museum and we might not like looking at the pictures in the museum, but we can develop an appreciation of that art.

We need to look at Renaissance art. We need to look at the art of the other historical periods, e.g.,

the Greek period, the Roman period, etc. Not only do we need to look at the paintings of those periods, but also the sculptures and the architecture. Other courses in the college curriculum is just as important at art, literature, and music. For example, we have the study of languages. It is good to speak "a" language and to be able to write "a" language. It is even better to be able to speak, read, and write another language. This will enables us to appreciate people that come to our country and cannot speak proper English.

If you try to learn another language, like French for example, once you start studying it and work your way up to the intermediate level of French and to the reading level and writing level and so forth, once you do that, you can appreciate how a person can come to the United States and not speak "proper" English. You can feel more in tune to that person. You can realize that part of your responsibility to that person is to try to communicate with him or her. So languages will certainly help a person to become more liberally educated.

We have regional prejudices also. For example, we have people from New York that speak English with such

accuracy and rapidity that they look down on those people that are from Georgia, South Carolina, and other southern states. They wonder "Why don´t they speak like me?" The person that asks such a question is probably not a truly liberally educated person. He or she does not realize that English is our national language, but in different parts of the country we have different dialects and different accents. So by studying languages, by coming in contact with people from different parts of the United States in college you gain a broader perspective and a more liberal education than would otherwise be possible.

A liberal education teaches us that a person can talk slow and yet be just as smart as we are. You may be able to talk fast and articulate, but the person, that talks slower than you talk, can be thinking better than you are thinking and can be more intelligent than you are. Sometimes we, as Americans, confuse articulation with intelligence. When we see a person that knows how to articulate very well, we say that that person is very intelligent. We should say "That´s a very articulate person." That would be more appropriate. Intelligence is something that is different from articulation.

Studying science and mathematics is important because of their utility in every day life and in advancing society as a whole. Hence, they should necessarily be part of any truly liberal education program. It is important that a person studies science and mathematics so that he or she can make decisions in his or her own best interest and in the best interest of society as a whole.

As truly liberally educated people, it is important that we study the history of engineering so that we can know the contributions that different societies have made, and the contributions that different peoples, in our present society, have made in the field of engineering. Likewise, it is important that we study the history of mathematics. We need to study the history of mathematics without being biased by the slant of any particular society. It is important that we study the history of mathematics so that we can know the different contributions that different peoples have made in the field of mathematics, not only those people that were in the western civilization, but also those that were in the eastern civilization as well.

As truly liberally educated people, we need to

know the contributions that all peoples have made in all the major fields of study. These include (but are not limited to) the following: law, medicine, engineering, mathematics, literature, art, architecture, languages, sports, history, sociology, psychology, education, biology, physics, chemistry, computer science, etc. We need to have a knowledge of these things in our backgrounds to really be considered liberally educated people.

Another area, that a person whose goal is a liberal education should study, is physical education and leisure studies. This area is becoming more and more important every day. Men and women alike are getting more and more leisure time in America. It is said that sometime in the future, we will have a four day work week. I believe that this is going to happen. If we do go to a four day work week, people will have even more leisure time. They need to know how to use it to keep themselves in good shape. Also, exercise and engaging in leisure activities can add to your feelings of self-esteem and well-being. So, leisure studies and physical education is an important part of any good liberal education program.

This type of liberal education will affect

society. This type of liberal education will give us a better work environment for the every day working man or woman, because he or she will better understand the other individual that is of a different ethnic group, different religion, or different political persuasion, or what have you. A truly liberal education will help to eliminate racism in our society. People will understand the contributions that other peoples have made and will respect the peoples and the contributions they have made. A truly liberal education will cause the supervisors on the various jobs to treat the workers, that work under them, better. Supervisors will be more humanitarian. They will realize that the workers under them are individuals that come from a long line of intelligent individuals, i.e., individuals that have made significant contributions to society.

A truly liberal education will help supervisors and managers to realize that the workers are capable of making a meaningful contribution to the company or organization. Because of this we will have more loyal workers in our organizations. They will feel more loyal to the company because the company will be a kinder and gentler organization than it was in the past. This, in turn, will help us to produce better

products.

The workers will be more conscientious because they will be shown more respect and courtesy by their supervisors. This will help our workers to take more pride in their work. In turn, because the adult workers are having more success on their jobs, are being treated with more respect on their jobs, this will have an effect on their families. Their children will be treated better. We will have less child abuse in our society, because the incidents of child abuse is related to success on the job. If a worker (a blue-collar or white collar-worker) has trouble on the job, many times, he or she will go home and take it out on a child or another family member, and thus causing abuse. Such things will be virtually eliminated in a liberally educated society.

Liberal education will help in all aspects of our society. It will help in the stock market. The way the stock market is now, it's really a shouting match as far as I can tell. You have a group of men all cluttered together in a room, and everybody is shouting and yelling. I think that if more people become liberally educated, we will be able to improve that system. I know that the system has been in existence a

long time, but I believe that there can be improvements in our system of stock exchanges.

A liberally educated country will help improve our trade deficit. People like quality products. Even Americans like quality products. If you sell a product to an American, if it is not a quality product, if it breaks down two or three days after the American gets it, he or she will give it back to you, and will ask for his or her money back. So, if you are going to make the Americans or the people of any nations satisfied, you must have quality products. If you are an American in the retail sales business, you want your customers to be satisfied. You don't want them to call you and tell you "Your product is not working, come and get it." So, even as an American retailer, if the American products that are made in America are substandard, you will choose not to buy those products. So, as a retailer, you will go out and you will look for the best quality product. And if it happens to be Japanese, that is what you will buy. Because you know that you are getting a quality product. You know that your customer will be satisfied and will not return the merchandise to you. In a truly liberally educated society, this won't happen. Our country will be

producing quality products. Retailers in our country will be able to buy more products from us. This will improve our trade deficit.

If I ship a thousand cars from Japan to the United States, if those cars are in excellent condition when they leave Japan, that´s great. But, if in the handling process (which is the process that takes place between the time they leave Japan and the time they reach the car dealership) they become damaged, the customer can still end up with a poor product or a product that will have to be returned or repaired. In a liberally educated society, because the workers take more pride in their work, because they feel better about their work, because their supervisors are liberally educated and treat them with more dignity and respect, they will handle those products better. They will be concerned about those products and about handling those products in the proper way so that they will be in good shape when they reach the consumer.

There are billions of dollars of products every year that are damaged during the shipping process. All of these costs eventually come out of the pocket of the consumer. For example, look at what happened in the recent Exxon spill incident. Such incidents will be

virtually eliminated in a liberally educated society.

In conclusion, it is only through a truly liberally educated populace that we will be able to build the "Great Society" that Lyndon Johnson talked about during his presidency. It is only through a truly liberally educated populace that we will be able to build the "kinder gentler" society that our present President George Bush has been talking about since he has been elected. It is only through a truly liberal education that America can become the great nation that our founding fathers intended it to be, e.i., a nation where peoples of different races, sexes, religions, and national origins can find life liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

SUGGESTED READINGS

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